

CLAIMS

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for providing a wireless telephone service, the method comprising:
providing a dedicated programmable wireless telecommunication switch coupled to a
5 public switched telephone network, a voice mail server, and a billing server;
providing a wireless handset having a telephone number associated with it, the handset
being capable of telephonic communication with the dedicated switch, and of placing and receiv-
ing telephones calls through the switch to and from telephone numbers on a secured list of tele-
phone numbers programmed in the switch;
10 providing at least two billing accounts associated with the telephone number of the hand-
set, the accounts comprising a secured account having a password and the telephone numbers of
the secured list associated with it, and a dependent account having a password associated with it;
detecting the telephone number of a caller of an incoming call to the handset, and if none
is detected, then prompting the caller to provide a password;
15 detecting the telephone number being called in an outbound call from the handset;
debiting the secured account for completed incoming calls to the handset in which the
detected number of the caller is on the secured list, or in which the caller provides the password
of the secured account, and for completed calls from the handset to telephone numbers on the
secured list; and,
20 debiting the dependent account for completed incoming calls to the handset in which the
detected number of the caller is not on the secured list, or in which the caller does not provide the
password of the secured account, and for completed outgoing calls from the handset to telephone
numbers that are not on the secured list.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein a dependent list of telephone numbers is programmed
25 in the switch, and further comprising:
debiting the dependent account for completed incoming and outgoing calls to and from
the handset that are made to and from telephone numbers that are on the dependent list.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein the handset is capable of making calls only to tele-
phone numbers that are on the secured or the dependent lists.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein the handset is capable of receiving calls only from telephone numbers that are on the secured or the dependent lists.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the telephone number of an incoming caller corresponds to a number on the secured list, or the caller provides the secured account password, and further comprising:

determining whether credit is available in the secured account;

if credit is not available in the secured account, providing the caller with an option of recording a voice mail to the handset user on the voice mail server;

10 if credit is available in the secured account, determining whether the user is available to take the call;

if the user is not available to take the call, providing the caller with an option of recording a voice mail to the user on the mail server;

if the user is available to take the call,

connecting the call to the handset;

15 metering the length of the call; and,

debiting the secured account for the call.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein credit is not available in the secured account, and further comprising:

20 providing the caller with an alternative option of adding credit to the secured account by listening to a recorded advertising message.

7. The method of claim 5, wherein the caller leaves a voice mail to the user on the voice mail server, and wherein the dedicated switch is further coupled to the internet, and further comprising:

recording the voice mail as or converting it to a sound file; and,

25 transmitting the sound file to an e-mail address of the user.

8. The method of claim 2, wherein the telephone number of an incoming caller corresponds to a number of the dependent list, and further comprising:

determining whether credit is available in the dependent account;

if credit is not available in the dependent account, providing the caller with an option of recording a voice mail to the handset user on the voice mail server;

if credit is available in the dependent account, determining whether the user is available to take the call;

5 if the user is not available to take the call, providing the caller with an option of recording a voice mail to the user on the voice mail server;

if the user is available to take the call,

connecting the call to the handset;

metering the length of the call; and,

10 debiting the dependent account for the call.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the caller leaves a voice mail to the user on the voice mail server, and wherein the dedicated switch is further coupled to the internet, and further comprising:

recording the voice mail as or converting it to a sound file; and,

15 transmitting the sound file to an e-mail address of the user.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein credit is not available in the dependent account, and further comprising:

providing the caller with an alternative option of adding credit in the dependent account by listening to a recorded advertising message.

20 11. The method of claim 2, wherein the user of the handset attempts to make an outgoing call, and wherein credit is not available in either the dependant or the secured accounts, and further comprising:

providing the user with an option of adding credit to the dependent or secured accounts by listening to a recorded advertising message.

25 12. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing a third billing account associated with the telephone number of the handset, the third account comprising an alert service account and having associated with it a password and an alert service list of telephone numbers programmed in the switch;

calling the user of the handset at the telephone number thereof at selected times and selected intervals;

if the user answers the call, playing or displaying a first pre-recorded message to the user of the handset;

5 prompting the user to acknowledge receipt of the message;

if the user does not answer the call or does not acknowledge receipt of the message within a selected period of time, initiating an escalation process, comprising:

repeating the call to the user at selected intervals thereafter;

sequentially calling the telephone numbers on the alert service list;

10 if a respondent at one of the numbers on the alert service list answers the call, playing or displaying a second pre-recorded message identifying the user, and stating that the user failed to acknowledge receipt of the first message;

prompting the respondent to acknowledge receipt of the second message; and,

15 continuously repeating the preceding steps until receipt of the first or the second message is acknowledged.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the first message comprises a reminder to take or administer medications.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein the dedicated switch is further coupled to the internet, and further comprising:

20 providing an interactive web page on the internet through which a customer or a customer's representative can obtain information regarding the customer's account and program selected features of the dedicated switch that relate to the customer's account;

logging the customer or customer's representative onto the web page;

25 prompting the customer or customer's representative for the telephone number of the handset;

if the customer or customer's representative provides the telephone number of the handset, prompting the customer or customer's representative for the password of the secured account or the dependent account; and,

30 if the customer or customer's representative provides the password of the secured account or the dependent account, providing the customer or customer's representative with the status of

the secured account or the dependent account and enabling the customer or customer's representative to modify the secured list of telephone numbers online.

15. The method of claim 2, wherein the dedicated switch is further coupled to the internet, and further comprising:

- 5 providing an interactive web page on the internet through which a customer or a customer's representative can obtain information regarding the customer's account and program selected features of the dedicated switch that relate to the customer's account;
- logging the customer or customer's representative onto the web page;
- prompting the customer or customer's representative for the telephone number of the
- 10 handset;
- if the customer or customer's representative provides the telephone number of the handset, prompting the customer or customer's representative for the password of the secured account or the dependent account; and,
- if the customer or customer's representative provides the password of the secured account
- 15 or the dependent account, providing the customer or customer's representative with the status of the secured account or the dependent account and enabling the customer to modify the secured list or the dependent list of telephone numbers online.

16. The method of claim 12, wherein the dedicated switch is further coupled to the internet, and further comprising:

- 20 providing an interactive web page on the internet through which a customer or a customer's representative can obtain information regarding the customer's account and program selected features of the dedicated switch that relate to the customer's account;
- logging the customer or customer's representative onto the web page;
- prompting the customer or customer's representative for the telephone number of the
- 25 handset;
- if the customer or customer's representative provides the telephone number of the handset, prompting the customer for the password of the alert service account; and,
- if the customer provides the password of the alert service account, providing the customer with the status of the alert service account and enabling the customer to modify the times and
- 30 intervals of the calls to the handset user, the message played or displayed to the user, the selected

intervals at which repeat calls to the user are made, and the telephone numbers of the alert service list online.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of the telephone numbers of the secured list includes a home location telephone number provided by a fixed wire telephone provider, and
5 further comprising:

determining whether the telephone number of the caller of an incoming call to the handset corresponds to a telephone number of the secured list;

if the telephone number of the caller corresponds to a telephone number of the secured list,

10 connecting the call to the handset;

metering the length of the call; and,

charging the cost of the call to the home location number through the fixed wire provider.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising:

15 providing the caller with an option of charging the cost of the call to the home location number through the fixed wire provider.

19. The method of claim 18, further comprising:

prompting the caller for the secured account password.

20. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of the telephone numbers of the secured list includes a home location telephone number provided by a fixed wire telephone provider, and
20 further comprising:

determining whether a telephone number being called by the handset corresponds to a number on the secured list;

if the telephone number being called corresponds to a telephone number of the secured

25 list,

connecting the call;

metering the length of the call; and,

charging the cost of the call to the home location number through the fixed wire provider.

21. The method of claim 20, further comprising:
providing the caller with an option of charging the cost of the call to the home location
number through the fixed wire provider.

5 22. The method of claim 21, further comprising:
prompting the user for the dependent account password.